

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

45 FREMONT, SUITE 2000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
PHONE AND TDD (415) 904-5200
FAX (415) 904-5400

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June 29, 2001

TO: Commissioners and Interested Parties

FROM: Peter Douglas, Executive Director
Steve Scholl, Deputy Director
Christiane Parry, Public Education Program Manager

RE: Policy for Sponsorship of Public Outreach Programs

RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends that the Commission adopt a policy to consider individual prospective sponsors on a case-by-case basis. Sponsorship decisions would be guided by criteria that address issues such as whether the corporation's activities are consistent with the Coastal Commission mission, whether the relationship would somehow undermine the credibility of the sponsored event or program, and whether there are social concerns regarding the corporation's image. See Attachment B for a full list of the proposed criteria.

Motion: I move that the Commission adopt a policy for the staff to review prospective corporate sponsors for Coastal Cleanup Day and other public outreach programs on a case-by-case basis, using criteria adopted in advance; and bring controversial items before the Commission for further review.

Background

At the September, 2000 Commission meeting, the Commission requested that the staff review its policy for accepting corporate contributions or sponsorships for California Coastal Cleanup Day and bring a recommendation to the Commission at a later meeting. The purpose of this memo is to address this request.

The Coastal Commission started California Coastal Cleanup Day in 1985. In the early 1990's, the event grew considerably when the Commission began working with the California State Parks Foundation (CSPF) to secure corporate sponsors for the event (from 10,000 volunteers in 1989 to 39,000 volunteers in 1992). CSPF serves as the fiscal agent for the California Coastal Cleanup Day Program. Sponsorships funds and funds from t-shirt sales and donations are deposited into the Adopt-A-Beach account at CSPF. The account is managed by the Commission's Public Education Program.

In recent years, the event has attracted close to \$200,000 per year in sponsorship dollars. In exchange for the contribution of sponsorship funds, the Coastal Cleanup Day Program acknowledges the sponsor's contribution in publicity materials for the event. The amount of recognition is dependent on the size of the contribution. Attachment A is a list of the sponsors of the 2001 Coastal Cleanup Day. Coastal Cleanup Day is currently the only Commission public outreach program partly funded by corporate sponsors. However, the staff recommends that this policy also apply to any possible program developed in the future that would be appropriate for corporate sponsorship, such as the Commission's education outreach activities.

Options

1. **Exclude Certain Types of Companies.** The Commission's past policy was to not accept Coastal Cleanup Day sponsorships from oil, tobacco, or alcohol companies. This policy was developed by the staff in the early 1990's. The rationale for the policy stemmed from the idea that one of the principle benefits sponsors receive is an affiliation with the Coastal Cleanup program – in other words, advertising that aligns the company with the cause. It was the staff's judgement that it sent the wrong message to potential volunteers for California Coastal Cleanup Day to advertise oil, tobacco, and alcohol companies, potentially undermining the integrity of the event.

A drawback to this policy is that it is a broadbrush approach. Potential sponsors are not given the benefit of consideration of individual company policies, practices and image. In addition, there may be companies that do not fall within the industries named that would be equally problematic for the event's integrity.

2. **Exclude Companies Regulated by the CCC.** Another consideration concerns companies that the Commission might encounter in a regulatory capacity. Accepting sponsorship funds from such companies could be perceived as a conflict of interest – that a company that contributed funds to the cause would receive favorable treatment in the regulatory process. The effect of this policy would be to exclude most oil companies, public utilities that operate coastal power plants, and other businesses that operate in the coastal zone. Of recent sponsors, PG&E, SCE and the Irvine Company are regulated by the Commission.

The conflict addressed by this option is mainly a hypothetical public perception concern. The regulatory programs and the public education program operate very independently, so there is no real risk that a sponsor would receive favorable treatment. Furthermore, we have no evidence that the public perceives these sponsorships as a conflict of interest.

3. **Accept All Donations.** Another alternative would be to accept all donations without regard to the source. This option might result in affiliations that would damage public perception of the Coastal Cleanup Day program.

Staff Recommendation: A Case by Case Approach

The staff recommends that the Commission adopt a policy to evaluate each prospective corporate sponsor individually, as to the appropriateness of the affiliation, using established criteria. The advantages of this approach are:

- It does not lump all companies in a given industry together, does not prejudge the appropriateness of a sponsor, and gives each company the benefit of an individual review.
- It gives the staff the ability to consider individual circumstances relating to a particular company.
- It sets forth explicit standards by which each potential sponsor is to be judged.

A drawback to this policy is that criteria bring with them a measure of subjectivity. However, the subjectivity can be kept to a minimum by factoring research on the company into the evaluation, and by relying on more than one person's assessment in making a decision.

The staff's recommended criteria are in Attachment B. These criteria address prospective contributors that are seeking publicity and an affiliation with the Coastal Cleanup Day Program. Prospective donations where there is no expectation of public recognition of the contribution will be reviewed separately.

Attachment A:

Corporate Sponsors of California Coastal Cleanup Day 2001

Brita

Oracle

KPMG

Universal Studios

Bank of America

See's Candies

American Plastics Council

Starbucks

Sprint

Aquarium of the Bay

**Proposed Criteria for Evaluating
the Suitability of Potential Sponsors**

In reviewing the suitability of a potential sponsor, the staff will use the following criteria. The staff will conduct research, as necessary, to determine whether a potential sponsor meets these criteria. If there is a substantial question as to whether a sponsor meets the criteria or not, the staff will bring the matter before the Commission for review.

1. The corporation's activities are consistent with the Coastal Commission mission.
2. The relationship would not undermine the credibility of the Coastal Cleanup Day event or other program (if sponsors are sought for other programs in the future).
3. There are no major social concerns regarding the corporation's activities.
4. The sponsorship does not require any undue obligation on the Coastal Commission's part.
5. The company does not expect the Coastal Commission to endorse its product, and would in no way imply such an endorsement in product advertising.

